

TITANIA'S WOOD

by Madeleine Doran

You will recall that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* opens in the court of Duke Theseus of Athens, and that it ends there on the day of his wedding to Queen Hippolyta. You will recall, too, that the time between the court scenes—a time of confusion in the affairs of two pairs of young lovers, of a King and Queen of the Fairy, and of a band of Athenian artisans (rehearsing a play to give at the Duke's wedding)—is set in a wood at night. These scenes comprise Acts II through IV in the Folio division. In this essay I am concerned with the woodland setting—how it is created and what purposes it serves. If I were writing about the comic imbroglio of the lovers in the wood, I might call it "Oberon's Wood," but since my subject is the flowers and the moonlight, I must call it "Titania's Wood." Not that I shall say much about her in herself. As a fairy, she and her attendants, together with Oberon and Puck, need a chapter of their own. The focus here is on the wood simply as a setting for what transpires in it. The setting is partly what it is because of her, and she herself in turn reflects it.

The wood is several things by virtue of certain threads in the web of the play, threads from which Shakespeare made parts of his design. It is first of all a Pyramus and Thisbe wood, a place of rendezvous for the eloping lovers. Lysander and Hermia agree to meet in the wood a league without the town. Ovid's runaway lovers decided to meet at Ninus's tomb outside the town and hide in the shade of a tree (*Metamorphoses* iv.88-89); the moon shone that night, for it was *ad lunae radios* that Thisbe saw the lion afar off. We hear of lions and other wild beasts in our wood, too.

In the second place, the wood is a *Knight's Tale* wood. Just as Chaucer's Duc Theseus rode out on a May morning after "the grete hert" "With hunte and horn and houndes hym bisyde" (*Kn.T.*1673-1678), so Shakespeare's Duke Theseus enters the wood early in the morning to the sound of the hunting-horn and with a "cry" of hounds. Shakespeare's wood, like Chaucer's, is a May wood, rich in association with spring, with love, with seasonal festival, with poetry. In *The Knight's Tale*, on the same morning that Duc Theseus went forth to hunt, Arcite, you remember, likewise rode out early to make himself a garland of woodbine or hawthorn leaves, and

to "doon his observaunce to May" (1499-1509). In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we hear that to perform just such a service, Lysander, Hermia, and Helena have come to the wood in the past—"Where I did meet thee once with Helena," Lysander says to Hermia, "To do observaunce to a morn of May." And with the same intent Theseus and Hippolyta come on their wedding morning. The lines Theseus speaks when he finds the sleeping lovers draw together all three couples:

No doubt they rose up early to observe
The rite of May; and, hearing our intent,
Came here in grace of our solemnity.
(IV.i.131-133)

Although this had not in fact been the intent of the lovers, Theseus's gracious assumption helps to point to the happy solemnity to come. Because the wood of the play is a May wood, it has in it adjuncts proper to such a wood, among them the hawthorn, Bottom's birds, and Titania's flowers.

Finally, it is a fairy-haunted wood. In a sense the fairies, invented for the action, bring the wood with them, for fairies and woods go together—in folk belief, in fairy tale and romance, in poetry and pageant. Not but what fairies may not be found outside a wood. But a wood is an expected place for them to be, particularly at critical times of the calendar, as on Midsummer Eve or Night. And although May Day is not Midsummer Day, Shakespeare employs some legerdemain with his festivals, just as he does with his shining and not-shining moon and other matters. Whatever the date, if the fairies are in the wood then Midsummer madness may be looked for. The moral of all this is that we should be prepared to find as much artfulness as imitation of nature in the creation of Titania's wood.

About Titania's being in a wood, there is something special, having nothing to do with her being a fairy but only with her name. Since Ovid's moon-goddesses, Diana or Latona, are sometimes called Titania, and since Diana lives in woods, then Shakespeare's Titania—though no Diana, certainly, and no moon-goddess—ought to have a wood, too. Oberon, in *his* literary ancestry, the romance of Huon of Bordeaux, was indeed a wood-dwelling fairy, and we remember that Shakespeare's Oberon wanted the little changeling boy as a knight of his train "to trace the forests wild."

The wood Oberon traces in the play, however, though "wild," is never sinister. It is not Mirkwood, and must not be. Since May "makes the merry mood," it cannot be the mysterious, even ominous, forest of the romance, rightly shunned by sensible knights; or Spenser's "saluage" forest of gloomy shade where the wild man lives deep within. It cannot be Spenser's "wandring wood" of Error, either, for the errors which occur in this one are wholly comic. There is plenty of discomfort to be found in it—Hermia is bedabbled with dew and torn with briars, the rude mechanicals find their

There are certain things in the wood of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, therefore, which it has by virtue of its literary ancestry, and which it must have by virtue of its function in the play. Yet it also has, as we all experience in the hearing of the lines which create it for us, a lively energy of its own. We must look closely to see how the formal, the traditional, the immediately observed are fused in a harmonious poetic invention.

The wood of the play, so Quince tells us, is "the palace wood," a mile without the town (I.ii.91), something short of Lysander's "league." The setting of the night scenes therein is introduced lyrically and evocatively rather than descriptively, in the opening conversation between Puck and one of Titania's fairy followers:

PUCK. How now spirit, whither wander you?
FAIRY. Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough brier,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire;
I do wander everywhere
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the Fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be.
In their gold coats spots you see:
Those be rubies, fairy favors;
In these freckles live their savors.
I must go seek some dewdrops here,
And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear.
(II. i. 1-15)

From a generalized range of country swept up in a formulary way to suggest fairy ubiquitousness ("over hill, over dale"), the poetry narrows to a sharp focus on a particular function, the fetching of dew, and on particular flowers, the wild cowslips to be found in woods or the borders of fields in an English spring. The visual detail of the reddish "freckles" inside the yellow corolla is accurate and engagingly vivid, but the metaphorical emphasis is on the bejeweled richness proper to the Fairy Queen. For gold, rubies, and pearls all have sovereignty in their kinds. Then Robin Goodfellow, in introducing Oberon and Titania to us, gives us in a few

swift phrases the sense of an oak wood with its green openings. We hear that Oberon and Titania

never meet in grove or green,
By fountain clear or spangled starlight sheen,
But they do square, that all their elves, for fear,
Creep into acorn cups to hide them there.

Again, the universal terms are followed by a particular, vivid action. In the freshness, daintiness, and grace of this introduction, the dramatic function of necessary exposition is clothed in decorative beauty.

Homelier details follow in the Fairy's questioning of the Puck about his mischievous pranks on the "villagery," and these details serve to bring the village close to the wood. The suggestion that we have got at once of a grove rather than of a limitless forest, of a wood close to town and farmland and pasture, of wildness and cultivation side by side, is sustained by all the circumstantial country details we are given throughout these scenes which transpire in the wood.

This same sense is given in the craftsmen's rehearsal by "the Duke's Oak" (I.ii.98), where there is a green plot and a hawthorn brake (III.i.3, 4); in Puck's simile of the wild geese or the russet-pated choughs which rise at the report of the fowler's gun (III.ii.19-24); in Theseus's order to uncouple the hounds in the western valley (IV.i.106); above all in Titania's circumstantial account of the effects of the rainy summer on farm and country-house alike: the swollen rivers and drowned fields, the rotting corn, the empty folds and the crows fattening on the murrion flocks, the muddled nine-men's morris and the overgrown mazes (II.i.88 ff.). The varied landscape of wood, field, meadow, and pasture, is, we may rightly say, the English countryside which Shakespeare and his audience knew.

It is something more as well. The type is also the landscape of bucolic poetry, as in Virgil's Eclogues; in them it is pervasively suggested, perhaps in the fullest detail in the First and Second. It is the type implied in English romantic or ideal pastoral (as distinct from satiric pastoral), for example in the opening of the 1590 *Arcadia* where the landscape is said to have "a civil wildness," in the Pastorella episode in *The Faerie Queene* (VI.ix, x), or in pastoral lyrics such as the familiar one attributed to Nicholas Breton, and written to be sung to the Queen at the splendid Elvetham Entertainment:²

In the merry moneth of May,
In a morne by breake of day,
Foorth I walked by the Wood side,
When as May was in his pride:
There I spied all alone,
Phillida and Coridon. . .

That pastoral convention was not absent from Shakespeare's mind is

evident in Titania's reproach to Oberon that he has stolen away from fairyland,

And in the shape of Corin sat all day,
Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
To amorous Phillida.

(II.i.66-68)

The formal pastoral note does not contradict the reality of the English setting, but gives it breadth and universality by allying it to an old tradition.

This alliance, between freshness of observation on the one hand and traditional rhetorical topics or "places" on the other, occurs as well in poetry which creates the wood, but rather differently.

When we think about it we realize that we have more realistic details about the countryside than we do of the wood itself. There is no lack of particulars about the wood, although they are rather dispersed throughout the scenes set in it than composed in a picture. In these particulars, however, nature is "translated." Set the simple, unfigured passage on the wild geese and the choughs, for instance—

As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky—

(III.ii.20-23)

beside the decorative, metaphoric one on the cowslips—those Queen's pensioners standing tall in their gold coats spotted with rubies, and the fairies hanging pearls of dew in their ears. Everywhere in the wood the homeliest creatures are transformed by artifice and turned to ceremonial uses. This is Titania's charge to her small elves:

The honey-bags steal from the humblebees
And for night tapers crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glowworm's eyes,
To have my love to bed and to arise;
And pluck the wings from painted butterflies
To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes.
Nod to him, elves, and do him courtesies.

(III.i.154-160)

The commonplace creatures which the fairies exorcise from Titania's bed are transformed by another sort of artifice; they are exorcised for us by the rhythm of the verse:

[1 FAIRY.] You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blindworms, do no wrong,
Come not near our Fairy Queen.

[CHORUS.]

Philomele, with melody
 Sing in our sweet lullaby,
 Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby;
 Never harm
 Nor spell nor charm
 Come our lovely lady nigh.
 So good night, with lullaby.

1. FAIRY. Weaving spiders, come not here;
 Hence, you long-legged spinners, hence!
 Beetles, black, approach not near;
 Worm nor snail, do no offence.

[CHORUS]

Philomele, with melody, etc.
 (II.ii.9-24)

And though these annoying, ill-willing creatures may be "English" enough, they consort readily, without jar, with the exotic beasts of Oberon's spell which follows hard upon:

What thou seest when thou dost wake,
 Do it for thy true-love take;
 Love and languish for his sake.
 Be it ounce or cat or bear,
 Pard, or boar with bristled hair
 In thy eye that shall appear
 When thou wak'st, it is thy dear.
 Wake when some vile thing is near.

(II.ii.27-34)

Artistically, the two sets of creatures, the homely and the literary, are allied by the similar metre of the incantatory verse. Moreover, both have a traditional basis, though of a different sort. Savage beasts are a hazard of the woods of folk and fairy tale, independently of geography or ecology, a very long way back. They are common in pastoral, too. Remember the lions, wolves, and boars which are always a threat to Virgil's shepherds. In romance, lions, being royal and the worthy adversaries of heroes such as David, Samson, and Hercules, are a necessity even in northern woods. The lion which frightened Thisbe was perhaps not wholly unexpected in the countryside of ancient Babylon. But the question of probable occurrence is irrelevant. The lion in the "Tale of Gamelyn" found its way, through Lodge's *Rosalynde*, from the Ardennes (where it was already foreign enough) into Shakespeare's Forest of Arden. The conventional decorum requiring wild beasts in forests may take precedence over verisimilitude of a different sort, truth to nature.

The native creatures of the fairy exorcism are also not without a place in tradition, though except for our hereditary enemy the snake they are

harder, naturally, to locate with precise literary references. They are the "ugly" small creatures which are so often an annoyance to country dwellers and which in folklore have been associated with intended harm or evil, whether directly exercised or through witches. Recall the venomous spiders, heavy-gaited toads, stinging nettles, and lurking adders which Richard II conjures to "throw death upon" his country's foes in their swift march (*Richard II*, III.ii.14-22) from the northeast coast to the west country.

I have said that the native creatures of the fairy exorcism consort without jar with the exotic creatures of Oberon's spell. And this is true. Nevertheless, the difference in nuance makes the response to the two passages not quite the same. For the exotic beasts are entertained conceptually, taken for granted as part of the furniture of an imaginary adventure in a wood, whereas the native creatures which are known in unadventurous experience touch, even though lightly, a deeper layer of irrational, even primitive, feeling. It is the poetry which fuses the observed and the conventional, the real and the fanciful, the emotional and the ideational into an imaginary whole. In producing the effect the verse is as important as the words and the images. Shorter measures in the fairy songs and spells, couplets and cross-rimes even in the pentameter lines are ways to heighten lyrical, decorative, and ceremonial effects.

This poetic fusion is nowhere better seen than in the description of Titania's bower. A May wood requires, by a long rhetorical and literary tradition (as well as by annual experience) the presence of birds and flowers. (The birds we shall this time have to forgo.) Of flowers we are always being reminded in the wood of the *Dream*. As Breton puts it, in one of his lyrics, "Flora hath bin all about, / And hath brought her wardrobe out." But flowers are most concentrated in this one formal *topographia* or description of place, the "close and consecrated bower" of the Fairy Queen. We must listen again to Oberon's familiar words:

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine.
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lulled in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws his enamelled skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in.

(II.i.249-256)

The nineteenth-century naturalistic school of Shakespeare criticism has taught us to believe that the flowery bank is created from recollections of places in the Warwickshire woods of Shakespeare's childhood, or even of one particular place in the woods. The suggestion of actuality is indeed present in the names and epithets of the flowers. Oxlips are a kind of *primula*, as are the cowslips we have already heard of, and Gerard says that cowslips

and primroses "ioie in moist and dankish places," and are found in woods and the borders of fields. Violets and woodbine (here, honeysuckle) grow in similar places, as does eglantine or sweetbriar, a form of wild rose. But two of the plants in Titania's bank are doubtful—wild thyme, a plant of dry and open ground, and the musk-rose, an eastern exotic introduced into England by way of Italy as a cultivated rose some time late in Henry VIII's reign or soon after.³ These, especially the musk-rose, should tell us that the flowers were chosen for more reasons, even other reasons, than propinquity. Note, too, that the flowers are even more asynchronous than they are asyntopous—if I may coin a word to match place with time. Gerard tells us that in England wood violets bloom in March "and at the furthest in April" and musk-roses in "Autumne or the fall of the leafe." In between, spreading out from April to September, come the others.⁴ Their perfumes, in nature, would follow in a fragrant succession rather than in a rich potpourri, as their poetic collocation suggests. But we must not be so literal, or inquire so closely into the calendar. This kind of assortment is characteristic enough of flower lists in medieval and Renaissance poetry, though generally there are fewer names. A good example may be found in the anonymous "Court of Love," which appeared in the apocryphal additions in the Stow Chaucer of 1561. It ends with a "rite of May":

And furth goth all the Court, both most and lest,
To feche the floures fressh, and braunche and blome;
And namly, hawthorn brought both page and grome,
With fressh garlandes, partie blewe and whyte,
And thaim rejoyssen in their greet delyt.

Eke eche at other threw the floures bright,
The prymerose, the violet, the gold; . . .⁵

If we look in poetry instead of in the calendar we discover that all the flowers in Oberon's list have literary associations of some sort and nearly all have emblematic meanings.

Wild thyme was beloved of classical poets because it gave its scent to the honey of Hymettus or of Hybla, the excellence of which was known to Prince Hal: "Is not my hostess a most sweet wench?" Falstaff inquires. "As the honey of Hybla," Hal replies. Thyme, by a syllepsis of the sense with "time," might easily be given various meanings. "Time is to trie me," an anonymous author writes, in "A Nosegaie alwaies sweet, for Louers to send for Tokens of loue":⁶

Time is to trie me,
as ech be tried must,
Letting you know while life doth last,
I wil not be vniust, . . .

Violets, naturally enough, belong to the poetry of spring from at least Virgil

on, and in the hierarchy of flowers are almost as precious and as loved as roses. They are also emblematic, for, being blue, which is the color of truth, they stand for faithfulness in love. So, likewise, does woodbine, or woodbind (whether honeysuckle or some other vine),⁷ its meaning suggested by its habit of clinging to a tree. Its meaning is set forth in the lovely *Flower and the Leaf*, an apocryphal Chaucerian piece first appearing in Speght's Chaucer of 1598. Among followers of the Lady of the Leaf (who was Diana) were those who wore chaplets of woodbine:

And tho that werē chapelets on hir hede
Of fresh woodbind, be such as never were
To love untrew in word, [ne] thought, ne dede,
But ay stedfast; ne for pleasaunce, ne fere,
Though that they shuld hir hertës al to-tere
Would never flit, but ever were stedfast,
Til that their lyves there asunder brast.

(lines 484-490)⁸

That yellow oxlip to which Oberon refers may introduce a discordant note, for yellow is the color of jealousy, and hence Flora, in Peele's *Arraignment of Paris* (I.iii.37-42) makes oxlips Juno's flower.

The bank, therefore, on which the wild thyme blows is ideal, as ideal as those catalogues of trees (though far more convincing than they) in which palm and beech, plane and cypress have grown side by side since Ovid's Orpheus charmed them into an assembly to harken to his lyre.

But I have not spoken of the roses in the bower. The rose, the queen of flowers, is also the most richly symbolic. Of it as a flower of Venus and of love I need not tell you. It was a flower of royalty, too, being first in the hierarchy of flowers. What about Titania's two kinds, the wild eglantine and the tame musk-rose? In the entertainment for Queen Elizabeth at Bisham in 1592, almost certainly written by Lyly, roses and eglantine were said to be the Queen's flowers.⁹ They would be doubly appropriate, as emblems both of royalty and of love, for the bower of Shakespeare's Fairy Queen. Elizabeth's cultivated rose was of course the symbolic double Tudor rose of red and white. For *his* queen, one supposes that Shakespeare chose the musk-rose for its rich scent rather than for its small white blossoms. He may have come on it in *Dido Queen of Carthage* (published in 1594). There it grows in a garden (IV.v.4 ff.) "where are beehives full of honey," and next an orchard of luscious fruits (plums, ripe figs, dates, dewberries) not unlike those Titania offers Bottom: apricocks and dewberries, purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries, and honey-bags stolen from the humblebees. Elizabeth's and Titania's second rose, the wild eglantine, was also much prized for its sweetness, not of its small pink flowers, however, but of its leaves. And like the woodbine and the rose, eglantine (or eglantere) was a favorite for use in the bowers or entwined arbors so often at the center of a *locus amoenus*¹⁰—one

of those pleasant places of love and idleness poets have always liked to dream of.

The flowers of Titania's bower, therefore, all have some kind of history, varying in richness of literary associations or emblematic meanings. To make this point is not to deny the experience of our senses. For the flowers of Titania's canopy and bed have been chosen for their perfume as well as for their meaning. Moreover, their names fall on our ears with a charming cadence. What Oberon's lines do, therefore, is to suggest the freshness of spring, a delicate sensuousness, the time of love and its vows of constancy, and beauty fit for a queen. All this is preparatory to the event which is to take place in the bower. Later, Titania will lead Bottom there to sleep "on pressed flowers" (III.i.144). She will wind him in her arms and say,

So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle¹¹
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barked fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! How I dote on thee!

(IV.i.41-44)

The conceptual element in the descriptive passage is as important as the representational one. Yet it does not chill the life which touches of actuality, sensuous suggestion, and rhythm create.

We shall not have space for Bottom's birds—his

woose cock so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The thrush with his note so true,
The wren with little quill—

except for the reminder that his catalogue of birds also has a long tradition behind it and that his cuckoo sings plain-song and keeps the un-ornithological function of its literary predecessors:¹²

The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo gray,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay.

(III.i.112-115, 117-120)

Those three hardest worked and most necessary birds to poets—the morning lark, the evening nightingale, the hooting owl—are in the wood as well.

After sleeping to Philomele's lullaby, it is to the sound of Bottom's unadorned song that Titania awakes, her ear enamored of his note. His song introduces us to the comic juxtaposition, in the scenes in the bower, of Titania's poetry and his prose, of her passion and his aplomb, his preference for good dry oats and a bottle of hay to purple grapes, green figs, and honeybags stolen from the humblebees.

The vision of Titania winding Bottom in her arms while her elves fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes lest he be touched with lunacy brings us

to the moon shining in the wood. The odd thing is that according to the court calendar it should not be shining. We have been told in the opening lines of the play that the old moon is waning ("O, methinks how slow / This old moon wanes!") and that she will be new four days hence, on the wedding day of Theseus and Hippolyta:

And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities. (I.i.9-11)

The time between should therefore be her dark phase. But before this opening scene is over, Lysander is arranging with Hermia to steal out of the city the next night,

when Phoebe doth behold
Her silver visage in the wat'ry glass
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass. . . .
(I.i.209-211)

That will be, according to Hermia, at "deep midnight" (I. 223). The image suggests fullness, not a much-waned moon. That same night, Titania is greeted by Oberon with "Ill met by moonlight" (II.i.60), and after their dispute she invites him to "see our moonlight revels" (141). Like the lovers, the Athenian craftsmen have agreed to meet for their rehearsal in the palace wood "by moonlight" (I.ii.90-92). Moreover, Bottom, anxious that their Pyramus and Thisbe play be properly convincing, calls for a calendar (III.i.45-46). Reassured to learn from Quince that there will indeed be a moon on the wedding-night, he proposes to solve their problem by having it shine in at a casement in the great chamber window—something the silver bow of a new moon, setting early in the evening, could hardly do between the late after-supper and midnight.

The contradiction in the calendar is patent and has been explained as owing either to Shakespeare's carelessness about the inconsistency or to an incomplete revision. Carelessness so extreme in a play so closely and richly wrought is hardly credible. Revision is credible enough; but if there was any, it was done so skillfully as to obliterate the joins. Therefore, leaving the contradictory moon must have been intentional, as intentional as if it were contradictory in the original version. The critical problem comes to the same thing in the end. By looking so closely at the calendar, we are making Bottom's mistake. Quince's solution is for one of their company to present the person of moonshine—in short, for an artificial and symbolic moon. So must our solution be.

There is still another anomaly. During the moonlit night in the wood, we are also sometimes told how very dark it is; Hermia finds Lysander only by the sound of his voice (III.ii.177-182). Or it may be the stars (in nature not good competitors with the moon) which engild the night—"Venus in her glimmering sphere" (III.ii.60-61) or "yon fiery oes and eyes of light" (187-

188). We begin to suspect that the moon is shining or not shining, full, dark, or new, depending not at all on the calendar, but on the effects Shakespeare wishes to create. These are dependent very much on literary and popular associations—the association of moonlight with lovers, with lunacy, with dancing fairies, with howling wolves; the association of the blackness of night with lost paths and irrational fears; of Venus with beauty and love; of phases of the moon with growing things and of the new moon with auspicious beginnings. We are reminded of the moon throughout the play; it is clearly a complex subject, of importance to more than setting. But within the limits of this essay we must confine ourselves to the moon shining in the wood, and to its bearing on Titania. Bearing the family name of a moon-goddess she must surely have something to do with it.

The moon of the woodland scenes catches up many of the things the poets (and therefore the mythographers) have said about it. Shakespeare's epithets for it are those of the classical poets: silvery (*argentea*), pale (*pallida*), swift (*velox*), wandering (*errans*, *vaga*, *omnivaga*), cold (*frigida*, *gellida*), chaste (*casta*), watery (*roscida*, dewy; *rorifera*, dew-bearing). If Shakespeare did not come upon these epithets in his own reading, he could have found them all listed (sometimes with the source-passages located) in the classical dictionaries, handbooks, and *thesauri* used as aids to composition in schools.¹³ But however he may have come by the epithets, he informed them with his own purposes, transformed them with his own poetic art.

One of the epithets of Hecate the moon-goddess was Virgil's *tergemina* (*Aen.* iv.511), varied in Ovid as *triformis* or *triceps* (*Met.* vii.177, 194). Her triplicity was taken by the mythographers to stand, among other things, for her powers in the three regions of sky, earth, and underworld, to which powers her names of Phoebe or Luna, Diana, and Proserpina respectively corresponded. It is as Phoebe that she shines clear in the heavens, the female counterpart of her twin brother, Phoebus Apollo. The most memorable image of the moon in the wood is of Phoebe beholding

Her silver visage in the wat'ry glass,
Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass.
(I.i.209-211)

Shakespeare's image has the same grace and elegant artifice as the passages on the floral setting and the labors of Titania's fairy attendants. It also serves a similar function of ornamental decorum.

Some passages, such as Oberon's on seeing Cupid's fiery shaft quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon, have to do with the Diana theme, with the choice of love or virginity, and to follow this theme would soon take us outside the wood. The passages of chief importance in the woodland scenes are those which link the fairies to the moon. Moonlight is their proper element. They are abroad only at night, their revels are moonlit, they run

By the triple Hecate's team
 From the presence of the sun,
 Following darkness like a dream.
 (V.i.373-375)

Hecate must probably be taken here simply as the moon-goddess or even just as the moon. Furthermore, similes of comparison make the fairies seem to have the very properties of the moon. Oberon calls them to trip after night's shade:

We the globe can compass soon,
 Swifter than the wand'ring moon.
 (IV.i.96-97)

The moon's epithets were "swift" and "wandering" because her sphere turned with the greatest speed of all the planets and because she wandered in her motions both north and south of the ecliptic. Titania's first fairy attendant uses the same comparisons. In his phrases, "over hill, over dale," "over park, over pale," wandering everywhere "swifter than the moon's sphere," he catches the other sense of wandering, that present in the epithet *omnivaga*, when the moon's light passes over the earth below.

The epithet for the moon Shakespeare most often uses is "wat'ry."¹⁴ She is "the wat'ry moon" whose beams quench Cupid's fiery shaft (II.i.162), she "looks with a wat'ry eye, / And when she weeps, weeps every little flower" (III.i.183-184), she decks "with liquid pearl the bladed grass" (I.i.211). The gathering of dew is a principal office of Titania's attendants.

And so we return to Titania and what she has to do with the moon apart from her name—for her name, in so far as it connects her with the virgin and huntress Diana, mainly bewilders. But I think she can be seen in a different relation to the moon—also incomplete, but suggestive; that is to the moon in her function as the governess of growing things. For though the moon might be thought of as cold and fruitless, a deity to whom virgins could chant faint hymns, she might also be thought of in a contrary way. Her feminine moisture joined with the sun's masculine heat was thought to be fructifying; and the growth, maturing, and decaying of plants (and the state of health of animal bodies as well) were supposed to be linked to her phases, crescent, full, and waning, occasioned by her position with respect to the sun. Anyone familiar in his childhood with farmer's almanacs knows about the proper seeds to plant in the light or dark of the moon. The moon's dew, greater or less according to her phases, helped in the germination of seeds. Therefore her monthly cycle of disappearance and return and her apparent relation to vegetation linked her, of course, with Proserpina and her annual cycle.

The floral setting makes Titania's concern for growing things seem rather narrowly horticultural and the decorative daintiness of her fairies' labors makes us take them all as a pretty fancy. There is, however, a deeper note.

The summer, she tells Bottom, "still doth tend upon my state" (III.i.140); that is, summer (with its fruits) waits upon her or is in her train. That is as much as to say, "Summer depends on my good will." She can be thought of as exercising such powers, of course, only as an agent, not as the personification of the moon. In a different and more oblique relation to the moon, her quarrel with Oberon, like disharmony between sun and moon, has seriously affected the weather and the crops. The moon is not only "wat'ry," but "the governess of floods" (which may perhaps be taken in a wider sense than tides); the excess of moisture is as damaging as the right amount is needful. The drowned fields of that wet summer rotted the corn and killed the flocks with pestilence.¹⁵ "Pale in her anger," she "washes all the air, / That rheumatic diseases do abound." Titania's relation to the moon here is rather of analogy than of independent authority. All this is elusive indeed. Yet when she is viewed as being connected in some way to the fructifying powers of the moon, her protection of the Indian woman and her offspring is less puzzling. Diana was a protectress of young creatures, and, as Lucina, was invoked by women in childbirth. In Roman mythology, she took on, indeed, the function of Juno, a goddess of marriage. The mythographers sometimes thought that the triple powers of the moon-goddess must be those of Juno, Diana, and Proserpina.¹⁶

These things I have been suggesting about the moon are not to be pressed for consistency (any more than one can find consistency in the goddess herself), but to be taken swiftly and lightly, as a brushing of Phoebe's dew. We know Shakespeare's aim would not have been to cram in all that he could find out from the mythographers, but rather to make poetry of the varied and rich associations the moon had in popular lore, in mythology, and in literature. The associations he suggests for Titania seem to be with the moon's powers over the growth and health of living creatures. This is the moon we hear about at the beginning of the play, in the waiting time before her reappearance as a crescent on the nuptial day, a moon of new beginnings and of fruitfulness. When, newly joined in married harmony, Oberon and Titania come to bless the bride-beds, the aspersion or sprinkling of the beds is with field-dew, the moon's holy water:

With this field-dew consecrate,
Every fairy take his gait,
And each several chamber bless,
Through this palace, with sweet peace.

This blessing has taken us quite out of the wood. And it is time to be out, anyhow. Triple Hecate—not just the moon-goddess by whose team the fairies run, but the dread goddess of the underworld, of ghosts and haunted crossroads, who brings a momentary chill to the wood—will have to be left for another day.

Neither map nor calendar will guide us through Titania's wood or give us a key to the night sky above it. Theseus, you remember, did not believe what he heard the next morning about the goings-on among the lovers or what they could tell him of the lost ways, the wild beasts, and the fog. Had anyone been able to tell him about a fairy king and his love-juice, a mischievous Puck, a fairy queen sticking musk-roses in the donkey's cheeks of an Athenian weaver, his skepticism would have been confirmed. He would have seemed right about those poet-fellows, of imagination all compact—and he would have been right, except for something he missed in the very nature of the poet's imagination. It was no fine frenzy which made this poet's eye see Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt. In Sidney's words, it was "the vigor of his invention," growing "in effect into another nature." For the poet "goeth hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done. . . . Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden."

NOTES

1. The text of the play followed is my own, prepared for the Pelican edition (Baltimore: Penguin, 1959).

2. In *Works of John Lyly*, edited by R. Warwick Bond (Oxford, 1901), I, 447; text quoted from *Englands Helicon* (1600), D3.

3. Richard Hakluyt (lawyer cousin of the geographer) mentions the introduction of the musk-rose in "Notes for a factor at Constantinople," 1582 (document 37 in *The Original Writings and Correspondence of the Two Richard Hakluyts*, edited by G. R. Taylor [London: Hakluyt Society, 1935], I, 194; reprinted in *Principal Navigations*, 2nd ed., 1598-1600 [Hakluyt Society Extra Series, Glasgow, 1904], V, 241).

4. On the flowers in Titania's bank, their habits and blooming times, see John Gerard, *The Herbal* (London, 1597) under particular flowers; for greater accuracy in identification and description, John Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris* (London, 1629); he agrees with Gerard on blooming times. Bacon, in "Of Gardens" (no. xlvi in *Essayes*, 1625), with a plan for sequential blooming, puts the musk-rose in July, earlier than do the other two.

5. *The Workes of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1561 (fo. cccxlviii ff.); passage quoted from the Oxford Chaucer, edited by W. W. Skeat (1894-1897), VII (no. xxiv, ll. 1431-1437), 447 (no significant variants from 1561 edition except "thaim" for "than," l. 1435).

6. Anonymous poem in *A Handful of Pleasant Delights*, 1584 (edited by Hyder E. Rollins, Harvard University Press, 1924), no. 1: *Thyme*, ll. 65-72; *Violet*, 55-62; *Roses*, 73-80.

7. "Woodbine" or "Woodbind" was most commonly used of honeysuckle (*Periclymenum*), but also of other climbing plants such as ivy, smilax, and especially blue bindweed (*Convolvulus caeruleum*, or *Campanula lazula* or *caerulea*); see the *Great Herbal* (1526) and the herbals of Wm. Turner (1551, 1568), Wm. Bullein (*Bulwarke of Defence*, 1562), and Gerard (1597).

8. *The Workes of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1598, fo. 368^r; quoted from Skeat's Chaucer, VII (no. xx, ll. 484-490), 376. On woodbine as symbolizing fidelity, cf. Lydgate's *Flower of Courtesy* (first printed in 1532 Chaucer) in Skeat, VII (no. ix, ll. 260-263, 269), 274.

9. Entertainment at Bisham in Bond's *Lyly*, I, 474, lines 23-24. Eglantine and the musk-rose are mentioned together in *Batman upon Bartholome* (1582), fo. 316^v.

10. Cf. *Faerie Queene*, III.vi.44; *Entertainment at Theobald* (May, 1591), in which the Queen's arbor was all of eglantine (Bond's *Lyly*, I, 418, ll. 1-5).

11. Here, unless "honeysuckle" is used appositively and "entwist" intransitively, "woodbine" must mean a different vine, probably the *convolvulus*.

12. Cf. especially *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* (in all sixteenth-century editions of Chaucer; in Skeat's Chaucer, Vol. VII, no. xviii): "That sory brid, the lew[e]de cuckow" (l. 90), whose song is "both trewe and plain" (l. 118).

13. For epithets with their classical sources located see Robertus Stephanus, *Thesaurus linguae latinae* (ed. pr. Paris, 1531) under "Diana," "Luna," "Phoebe," "Proserpina" (many repeated in Wm. Cooper's *Thesaurus* under "Luna," but not located); Ravisius Textor, *Epithetorum opus*, especially under "Diana" and "Luna." The only editions of *Epithetorum epitome* (as distinct from *Ep. opus*) I have been able to see (London, 1595, 1634) omit sources of epithets, as does Cooper. Similar epithets can be found everywhere in other sixteenth-century English poets, educated in the same way as Shakespeare.

14. On the moon's properties, functions, and effects, consult not only the annotators and mythographers, but also *Batman upon Bartholome*, Lib. viii, cap. 29 (mostly from Pliny, *Nat. hist.* Lib. II); John Swan, *Speculum Mundi* (1635), Chap. vii, sec. 3; for a brief popular account, *Kalender of Sheparden* (London: Notary, ?1518, and subsequent editions throughout the century).

15. Since pestilence is engendered of humours, the moon is said to cause pestilence; so Natalis Comes, *Mythologia*, III. xviii; also *Batman upon Bartholome*, viii. 29 (fo. 134^v).

16. See esp. Catullus, 34, in which Diana is invoked as Juno-Lucina, Luna and "Trivia" (Hecate); and note Cooper, *Dictionarium historicum et poeticum*: "Hecate, A name of Diana, Juno, or Proserpina"; "Lucina, One of the names of Juno and Diana, called the goddess of byrthe."